

UNIFIED THINKING
IN
HOME MISSIONS

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All endeavor should be subjected to such review and to such scrutiny as would measure both direction and results. This need is peculiarly great where work is undertaken by a group of agencies each of which has its own responsibilities that press for increased support, and in each of which are diverse opinions as to relative values. It is only through the fullest understanding that co-operation can become increasingly effective and that forward-looking plans can be clear and constructive. If there be any who shall read these pages and feel that actual accomplishments are small when viewed in the light of the great task and of the far-reaching service of the denominational Home Mission Boards, they should be reminded that unified thinking is a thing of slow growth and that it must be developed and become a part of the common body of thought before action can result.

Sixteen years is but a short span of time, yet since its organization the Council of Women for Home Missions has drawn into its membership twenty national women's Boards and societies representing as many denominations, while the Home Missions Council organized the same year has in its membership forty-one national Boards and societies representing twenty-seven denominations. At the first meetings of the two bodies time had to be spent in the mere getting acquainted and in finding a point of departure from which to move out into co-operative service. This has been by no means the least interesting part of the coming together; each Board has thought in terms of its "peculiar problem," and

lo, their "peculiar problems" were the common property of all the Boards. Each Board had seen a sector of the country as its responsibility and in terms of its own relation thereto; suddenly it had opened before it the relation which it bore to other agencies serving nearby and its denominational viewpoint was given another slant by the new knowledge of agencies serving similar groups in contiguous territory. It was inevitable that the viewpoint became more national and less sectional and that the objective became one common to all rather than the property of a single group. Had the two Councils accomplished nothing beyond the bringing together of the leaders of denominational home mission service and of enriching the thought of each by the knowledge of the work of all the others, their existence would have been amply justified.

Mission Study Books. The preparation and publication of textbooks presenting some phase of home mission need and accomplishment have been of basic value in co-operative thinking, and when one realizes that more than 100,000 copies of these books are sold each year, one gains some idea of the force unleashed and set at work. The effect is felt from Board headquarters, where books are handled, to the small community, where the members of the various Protestant churches unite in a mission study class, together facing the problem of home mission need and effort, and in so doing coming to see their own community problem and program as a unit of service. No one effort toward unified thinking has been of larger impulse than the textbook, which serves a quarter of a hundred denominations, is studied by tens of thousands in local churches and is the basis of study at summer conferences that draw together each year for a week of intensive thought and preparation large groups of women and young people and, increasingly, groups of ministers and laymen.

Comity Arrangements. The most prompt and natural result of united thinking has been the acknowledgement of the need of comity arrangements in some of the mission fields. It was a new day and a prophetic one when, almost twelve years ago, a group of Board Secretaries of a number of denominations together visited a section of the country, called into conference the workers of the Boards they represented, and around a table studied the Church problem of their combined parishes. Re-allocation of people and transfer of denominational responsibility was suggested with frankness, that the maximum of territory should be ministered to with a minimum of workers and of funds. Space would not serve to tell of the many scores of similar conferences that have been held and of the oftentimes amazing results that have been achieved. These things have been done quietly, but effectively, and as a result in some States following the good example of Montana which showed the new road, interdenominational home mission agencies have been permanently organized that distribution of responsibility may be prompt and effective.

It is of interest to quote briefly from the stirring report of a deputation of secretaries of five Boards that visited the Northwest in the summer of 1923:

"We find that the spirit of co-operation is greatly reinforced, as compared with former years. . . . A large factor in the progress is the new spirit of *service* which is replacing the spirit of denominational aggrandizement.

"We find that there are not a few serious instances of overlapping, concerning some of which there is hope of early correction, by conference of those immediately involved. Concerning many others, the overlapping is far more serious in appearance, when stated in figures, than it is when studied in the field, because many of the churches enumerated are either of foreign-speaking groups, who are not yet fully Americanized, or of sporadic sects, which do not co-operate in the Home Missions Council, or in any other general movements of the Kingdom of God. We find, however, that the instances of *overlooking* are so much more numerous than those of overlapping,

that the great stress of home mission activity must be in meeting the unmet needs of the people. For example: The remarkable table prepared by the Western Washington Home Missions Council shows that of the small places which have any church, 78 per cent. have only one church, leaving but 22 per. cent. which could have any semblance of competition, but that 66 per cent. *of all the places tabulated are without religious provision of any kind.* . . . We believe that more than one-half of the neighborhoods which have more or less community life of their own, are without any regular religious ministry, and great numbers of them without any religious ministry whatever.

"This most delicate and difficult undertaking on earth—sectarian readjustment—has, in less than a dozen years made positive, intensely practical, organic advance in a solid block of seven states in the northwest section of the country, with yet another, nearly contiguous state farther east asking for it. When this situation in the northwest is coupled with the entirely distinct achievements in a similar direction by two New England states, and by a number of cities, while others are approaching it, your deputation is convinced that the endeavor to secure systematic co-ordinate, practical co-operation in home missions, in place of haphazard and sometimes competitive action, is as sure as the rising of the sun. It is obviously imbedded in the providential order."

The Associated Evangelical Churches of Alaska. A further result of the new knowledge each of the other, and one similar to the above, may be found in "The Associated Evangelical Churches of Alaska," in which are represented the ten denominations working in that territory. Distribution of responsibility has led to some adjustments and others are under consideration.

Cuba and Porto Rico. In Cuba and Porto Rico most definite allocations of territory have been made so that two denominations may not be working in one section while other parts of the island are neglected. In Porto Rico an Evangelical Seminary serves six denominations as do, also, a religious paper and a printing press. Cuba has not gotten so far on the road of interdenominational co-operation but she is thinking in the right terms.

The Board for Christian Work in Santo Domingo. Entrance into the Dominican Republic three years ago by five Boards representing three denominations which incorporated as "The Board for Christian Work in Santo Domingo" marked a new step in interdenominational agreement, for here is not a comity arrangement but a unified piece of work with a common treasury into which each co-operating Board pays its part and from which all expenses are met. There is single administration of the work inaugurated in the island, workers are chosen irrespective of their denominational affiliations, and the church established is known as "The Evangelical Church of Santo Domingo." This venture has been signally blessed and the work, evangelical and medical, far outstrips the resources of the Board, while an educational program of much importance waits on larger reinforcements. The Committee on Co-operation in Latin America and the two Councils have a Joint Committee on the West Indies and the inauguration of service in the Dominican Republic was the work of this combined group.

Conferences. Conferences are the vogue of the day. It is easy to disparage them; more easy to weary of them and to clamor for peace and to be allowed to remain in the comfortable rut. But it is through knowledge and understanding that progress is made. These come from the comparing of facts and ideas, and from seemingly casual conferences of small groups are often brought dynamic truths that lead to great accomplishment. Representatives of the two Councils annually attend scores of conferences—east and west and north and south. At these are discussed the problems of rural regions and of city groups, of many races and of alien tongues. Some have brought about co-ordination of local working forces, others have resulted in plans affecting the national Boards, but in all cases they

have had but the aim to acquaint all with the work of each, to simplify methods, to stimulate to more adequate service, and to co-ordinate efforts when by such a plan better results may be obtained. Some of these getting-together conferences, either of special groups or of a regular Joint Committee of the two Councils, have resulted in accomplishments that should be recorded. There are others of equal or greater value that are still in the conference stage but which are dynamic in possibility, as, for example, the small and vital conferences between representatives of the Home Missions Council and Jewish rabbis—an effort to promote understanding and good will to counteract the tragic influence of anti-Semitism.

Oriental in the United States. Four years ago the Joint Committee on Oriental in the United States presented a report elaborating the competition of denominations among these people in two or three large cities of the Pacific Coast and the tragic neglect of great numbers of them in smaller communities. So serious was the situation to which attention was directed that a special Committee was appointed made up of representatives of the Boards carrying on this work, this Committee being urged to take cognizance of the situation and to find remedies therefor, if possible. The Committee has met both on the Pacific Coast and at New York and has evolved a plan of co-operation and consolidation that will not only do away with the unfortunate competition but that gives promise of an advanced program. A first step has already been made by the plan of the Methodist and Presbyterian women to unite their Homes for Chinese girls, and it is expected that by the next school year the denominational day schools will have been consolidated into a graded school. Some of these pieces of work are of long standing and it will take time to put into working effect the

full program as planned, but a start has been made and it can confidently be expected that the consolidations and adjustments will be made.

Study of Phases of Work. United study of a phase of work may lead to the betterment of existing conditions, to new plans of comity adjustments, or to the development of pieces of work that cannot well be done by any group alone. Some most interesting studies have been made of the types of work among Mormons, Spanish-Americans and Indians, among which groups a number of denominations are working. A detailed study of the educational problems of Utah was prepared and has been of much value in determining future developments. One year a lecturer who presented Christian principles and the Christian life was sent to Utah in the hope of breaking down Mormon isolation by giving to those people the opportunity to hear something of churches other than the Mormon. The speaker was welcomed in the towns to which he went and large and interested audiences came to hear him.

Religious Work Directors in Government Indian Boarding Schools. Conferences on work for Indians brought out the unexampled opportunity presented by the presence in Government Indian Boarding Schools of thousands of the choicest young people of many tribes, and the fact that the opportunity offered by the Government of two hours per week, besides Sunday, for religious instruction was not often being utilized by Protestant forces. Following the conferences three years ago a number of the Mission Boards, using the Councils as their agent, subscribed a fund whereby it was possible to place Religious Work Directors in six of the largest of these schools. These Directors organize the religious life of the Protestant students, enlist the co-operation of the local communities, carry on Sun-

day Schools and young people's societies, form social and friendly centers, and in places where it is needed, organize the play and recreational life. They have been men and women of choice spirit and their ministry to these young people has been fruitful of results. From it there will come Christian leaders for remote and neglected tribes. In a few of the Government schools denominational Boards finance Religious Work Directors which serve all Protestant groups, and not only those of their own denomination.

Student Fellowship for Christian Life-Service.

While Indian students were thus being cared for, groups of other students in widely scattered sections of the country were organizing themselves, each group independent of all others, to bring together in each College and University those young people who desired to prepare for Christian service in the homeland. The Joint Committee on Recruiting the Home Mission Force sent two secretaries, a man and a woman, into the Colleges to present the claims of this great cause: these secretaries found the groups already organized. Immediately the nationwide need of workers claimed the attention of the students and they urged that they might be organized nationally, as were the students preparing for service in the foreign mission fields. As a result of their urging, in February of 1922, 54 students from 12 States representing 33 Colleges met at the University of Illinois to consider together the challenge of the homeland. Out of this gathering there came the *Student Fellowship for Christian Life-Service*, a student-organized and student-managed body, which keeps a close relation to the two Councils through mutual representation on Committees. The Fellowship is the child of the Councils and of the Boards, and as such should bring to their help in coming years many trained and efficient men and women. It

is of interest to note here that another Joint Committee of the two Councils is striving to standardize "common policies in securing, equipping and supporting missionaries" and to standardize the educational requirements and training to be required of candidates.

Work among Farm and Cannery Migrants. To speak of students and home missions is to think of the work some of these young people are doing during the summer months. The Interchurch World Movement having made a study of the migrant workers of the United States recommended that the Woman's Boards of Home Missions should concern themselves with the conditions surrounding women, girls and children on the truck farms and in the many fruit and vegetable canneries that work at such pressure during the few weeks when they are open. Eight Boards agreed to co-operate in service to this group and asked the Council of Women to contribute its machinery to further this co-operative work. A supervisor was secured, locations chosen, and in the summer of 1920 work was begun.

In one county of Maryland there are over two hundred canneries, and other counties of that State as well as Delaware, Southern New Jersey and Southern Pennsylvania have hundreds more, so that this section of the country was chosen in which to begin a demonstration program. The workers in the canneries are usually foreigners brought out from the nearest cities, whole families coming, men, women, and children. As the running time of each cannery is brief the housing preparations are of the most primitive kind, often unsanitary and devoid of opportunity for proper decency. Each family frequently has one room in a long row of attached shacks and the family cooking is usually done out of doors under open sheds, a number of families using one stove. The older children work in the

cannery when there is a pressure of work and both parents work. This leaves the younger children without supervision or care.

The original plan was to secure a small house, store or even shack immediately adjoining the cannery, to place in charge three young women, two of each group being College undergraduates, to open a Day Nursery for the care of the babies, and a Summer School on the plan of the Daily Vacation Bible School for the children too young to be in the cannery. On days when there is no work older children and even adults are interested onlookers and occasional participants. There are also clubs for older boys and girls and Mothers' Clubs at hours when they can attend.

It is not possible to give a detailed account of the work, nor the success achieved—that is recorded in the special leaflets on Farm and Cannery Migrants, but it can be said that the co-operation and enthusiasm of the cannery owners who have put up buildings for the various activities, who have piped water and in numerous ways co-operated, is one of the greatest testimonies to the value of the undertaking. One does not know which to admire the more, the quick and fine response of the little ones to the teaching of manners and morals, of Bible and patriotism, of cleanliness and kindness, or the joyous, unflinching spirit of these young College women who carry on through days of intense heat, amid conditions unattractive and difficult. There is new hope in the hearts of those who watch the service they give and know they represent many of their generation. Each season there are scores more of applicants for this opportunity to serve than there are places.

Immigrant Aid at Ellis Island. One cannot close this inadequate summary of the co-operative spirit that is abroad without speaking of the splendid activ-

ities that head up in the Joint Committee on New Americans. One of the interesting phases of the work is that done at and for Ellis Island, the great immigrant station in New York Bay. Through the courtesy of the Commissioner a limited number of welfare workers are allowed to be on the Island to provide assistance to those detained there. Because of the unbelievable number of organizations desiring to be represented on the Island and because of the limitation of space, it has been necessary that a fixed number should be allowed there, and no more. As the outcome of years of experience and of much consultation there has been formed a General Committee on Immigrant Aid at Ellis Island, this committee having in its membership Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and non-religious organizations. By common planning it has become possible to have representatives speaking all the major and some of the lesser languages so that there is a daily clearing of people from one worker to another.

Follow-Up of Protestant Immigrants. Out of all of this background, and through the courtesy of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church, which has contributed part of the time of one of its secretaries, a plan has been evolved for a Follow-Up of Protestant Immigrants, similar to the very elaborate and successful system used by Catholics and Hebrews. The name, address, destination and denomination, of the immigrant being secured by the worker on the Island are sent to the offices of the Councils from which place this information is sent to the nearest pastor of that denomination, urging that the immigrant be located, invited to church and made welcome. Duplicate reports make it possible to know the final results in many cases, and the service has proven itself very worth while. As many as 800 or 900 names are thus reported in a month.

Race Group Studies. Also in behalf of immigrants and their needs has been the interdenominational co-operation in producing the Race Group Studies, and in making available information concerning publications in foreign languages in America. This invaluable service has been made possible through the special co-operation of the Methodist Episcopal Board of Home Missions.

A Foreshadowing of Larger Accomplishment. The whole story of co-operating among denominations cannot be told in one brief article. This is but a suggestive presentation, but it may be that it will be helpful to some who have not known of the developments of recent years. It may foreshadow something of the possibilities that await the churches when they shall more and more have come to know that in union there is strength and that, preserving denominational integrity, there is yet a large field in which conference and comparison may clear the way for larger accomplishment, and that there are times and places where only a unified service can meet the need.

